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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000745

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: ORTEGA ACCORDS ALEMAN VIRTUALLY FREE REIGN

REF: A. MANAGUA 0617

[1](#)B. 2005 MANAGUA 22154

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In an effort likely aimed to keep Nicaragua's liberals divided and ensure 'buy-in" from the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) on the appointment of regime-friendly Supreme Court justices and other government positions, the Ortega government issued instructions on March 16 allowing convicted felon and former President Arnoldo Aleman to move freely throughout the country. The price for Aleman's freedom probably also includes PLC support for constitutional reforms allowing consecutive presidential re-election. Ebullient and emboldened by the news, Aleman promised to use his newfound freedom to campaign for liberal unity and lost no time in visiting allies, including Bishop Bosco Vivas of Leon. Opposition leaders blamed President Ortega for the decision, while Ortega snidely remarked that perhaps daily La Prensa had lobbied for Aleman's newly found freedom. End Summary.

Ortega-Aleman Pact Continues to Dominate Political Arena

[1](#)2. (U) On March 16, Carlos Sobalvarro, the director of Nicaragua's national penitentiary system, notified convicted felon/former President/PLC leader Arnoldo Aleman that his conditions of medical parole previously restricted to Managua had been expanded to allow him free movement throughout the country. Ebullient and emboldened by the news, Aleman publicly vowed to use his newfound freedom to campaign for liberal unity. Losing no time, Aleman set off on a weekend tour to visit "friends" in several nearby towns and cities, including Bishop Bosco Vivas of Leon. (Vivas is also a staunch supporter of Cardinal Obando y Bravo, President Ortega's newly minted director of the Sandinista government's Peace and Reconciliation Council.)

Sandinistas Attempt to Dodge Responsibility

[1](#)3. (U) When possible, the Sandinista government dodged press inquiries on its decision. When pressed, President Ortega snidely remarked that perhaps (right-leaning) daily La Prensa was behind the decision. Nonetheless, independent media clearly pointed the finger at Ortega.

ALN Calls a Spade a Spade

¶4. (U) Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN) leader/former presidential candidate Eduardo Montealegre gave no quarter to the Sandinista government, placing the blame squarely on President Ortega's shoulders. The ALN leader asserted that this latest manifestation of the Ortega-Aleman pact is proof that Aleman's recent visit to ALN headquarters was but a media ploy crafted to press Ortega to cede to Aleman's request for unlimited freedom of movement, or face the threat of imminent liberal unity. Montealegre called on the Court of Appeals to determine once and for Aleman's guilt or innocence. He publicly characterized PLC lawmakers as craven enough to vote for constitutional reforms that would allow for Ortega's consecutive presidential election and to support the FSLN's bid for a constitutional assembly engineered to grant Ortega powers similar to those of Venezuela's Chavez. ALN Assembly caucus leader Maria Eugenia Sequeira shared her conviction that Aleman is no longer a liberal democrat and instead, is helping Ortega turn Nicaragua into a communist-socialist regime.

MRS Pulls no Punches

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¶5. (U) For Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) National Assembly lawmaker Monica Boltadano, the Ortega government's "shameful release of Aleman makes a mockery of justice in Nicaragua." Sergio Ramirez, who served as Ortega's vice president in the 1980s and is now affiliated with the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS), joined the clamor against the Ortega government's decision to expand Aleman's medical parole. He warned that the action is a prelude to Aleman's pardon before the 2008 municipal elections.

Comment

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¶6. (C) We believe that the Ortega government's decision to grant Aleman free reign of the country is part of its longstanding strategy to keep Nicaragua's liberals divided and off balance, and demonstrates that the Ortega-Aleman pact continues to dominate the country's political stage. In essence, Aleman's free reign of the country is a de facto pardon, perhaps a prelude to a formal pardon through a broad amnesty/national reconciliation initiative that would be sponsored by Obando y Bravo -- after a compliant Attorney General files dozens of doubtful cases against ex-President Bolanos, former Bolanos government officials, Eduardo Montealegre, and anyone else who has dared cross the pact.
TRIVELLI